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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on ways to enhance the study skills of students in the middle grades, and describes the use of study guides, textbook activity guides (TAGs), and the Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review (SQ3R) technique of textbook study. Research on the use of the techniques is reported. It is concluded that the proper use of study guides can help students attain independence and combine process and content for successful learning from content area text. Furthermore, significant student achievement may be attained if content area teachers develop instructional study guides to help students become motivated, self-directed, and eager to learn. (RH)

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THE EFFECTS OF TAG AND SQ3R STUDY SKILLS METHODS ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS

Jerome S. Pankey

"Get back to the basics" is a cry that can be heard from parents as well as educators from around the nation. In order to stifle the cry many teachers are using study skills guides to help students understand content and learn independently from the text. The study guide or group of activities prepared in advance is designed to help students to organize information from the chapter and suggest the use of applicable skills to achieve content goals.

Although there have been a number of studies to research the effects of Textbook Activity Guides (TAG) and Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review guide (SQ3R) the results have been inconclusive and contradictory. Results of most research could only be applied to the specific sample of the study. Although the research and data are not clear, it is evident that with both study skills systems student interest was sparked and they were positively motivated to go on.

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Motivation is a key in learning and when one finds a means to create the new found interest in students want to learn, further studies should be seriously considered. Additional research with improved designs is needed. The results of this paper can be viewed as a small step but in the right direction.

A constant aim in education is that what students learn in one situation can be transferred and applied to other related situations. Much of what is taught is based on the idea that students assured this ability. Hansell (1976) reports that reading teachers have been saying for years, that students can be frustrated,

irritated and demeaned by being required to attempt tasks which they cannot hope to succeed.

National studies and scholars responding to their recommendations steadfastly unite on a single issue -- study skills are a critical component in the learning process (Christen and Murphy 1984). Schilling (1984) writes that students deserve the confidence and the understanding that using study skills can give them.

Study guides are provided by teachers to help students to focus content and process information when learning independently from the text and to narrow the gap between the demands of the text and the ability of the learner. Good study skills should be acquired at a young age. Students must understand that they cannot read their science and social studies assignments in the same way they would read a novel (Schilling, 1984). Schilling concluded that there are many study skills that can be taught to intermediate grade students. Students deserve and need to gain the confidence that understanding and using study skills can provide.

Although educators recognize the importance of teaching middle-grade students to improve their memories for content area reading, researchers have only begun to address this issue with instructional investigations (Baumann, 1983). Berkowitz (1986) designed a study to examine instructional techniques that would improve sixth grade student's ability to recall expository text. Readers who understand and can use an author's structure as a framework for memory will recall more information than readers who do not.

> If sensitivity to text structure facilitates memory for text information, and if large percentages of middle-grade students do not appear to use text organization to facilitate memory for expository text, providing these students with instruction in identifying the structure of passages and in using that structure as a study aid may result in improved recall for text (p. 79).

Educational Leadership reported that underachievers appeared to have learning style characteristics that differed dramatically from those of high achievers (Dunn, 1979). Much research supports the fact that there is an obvious need for students to attain study skills. The design of the exact program remains in question.

Many students have difficulty using textbooks effectively and some evidence points to substantial avoidance of textbooks use by middle and secondary school students (Rieck, 1977). Generally students who attempt to learn a content area from a text rely heavily on teacher support and guidance. Davey (1986) explains that one of our goals should be to change this student behavior from textbook avoidance to effective, independent textbook use. To that end, textbook activity guides (TAG) may be an answer for classroom teachers in their quest for student understanding of a content area.

Textbook activity guides engage students in using content area materials actively and flexibly (Davey, 1986). The written guides specify what is to be learned and how it should be learned.

TAGs differ from other textbook study guide approaches in several important ways (Estes and Vaughan, 1985). First, unlike Herber's (1978) three level study guides, TAGs are not based on rather restrictive and possibly inaccurate ideas of hierarchical levels of comprehension in learning from textbooks (Rosenshine, 1980). TAGs guide readers through textbooks with tasks directly related to instructional objectives.

Second, TAGs are not dependent on clear, coherent organizational patterns being presented in textbooks, as are pattern study guides (Herber, 1978). TAGs are versatile and can be used with most textbook selections. Therefore, teacher input and skill in preparation plays an important role.

Finally, unlike other study guide approaches, TAGs emphasize active

student involvement through cooperative learning and a self-monitoring component. Student work is done in pairs and students are responsible for finishing and checking their tasks.

Hansell (1976) states that student centered prereading activities require the student to think about, discuss, or guess about the content of the particular selection. Students then must read to test their guess or hypothesis. Karabalios (1979) states that it seems obvious that students who do receive preparatory instruction will do better than students who do not receive such instruction. In his study seventy-six seventh grade students were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. Each group received pre-reading of the textbook activity guide in different degrees. Within these limitations the results indicated a significant difference between the groups receiving the greatest and the smallest amount of pre-reading activities in the form of study guides.

Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review (SQ3R) is one of the most widely recommended techniques to facilitate textbook study.

> Although intuitively recognized as superior to methods commonly used by students for studying, the modicum of research which compares the effectiveness of SQ3R to other methods of study has provided inconclusive emperical evidence to support the use of SQ3R (Orlando, 1980, p. 215).

Some research studies reported finding favoring SQ3R-trained groups as compared to groups not trained in its use while other studies reported contradicting data.

Before using the SQ3R study skills method, Stahl and Henk (1985) point out that students need to acquire prerequisite reading skills prior to learning a textbook study system and teachers need to be selective in introducing the system to a class. Typically, instruction in the SQ3R technique consists merely of an introduction to the steps involved. It is obvious that if the system is going to work, much effort in studying and implementing the system and further training of students must be done.

SQ3R can effectively be used at the junior high level where content becomes more and more important. Beyer (1980) describes how the SQ3R approach is effectively designed to facilitate reading comprehension and therefore the strategy can help students apply this skill to history and social science textbooks.

Project CAPABLE (1980) initiated in the Madawaska School District, Maine, is a classroom approach which integrates the basic learning skills with content. The goal of the project is to use basic learning skills to enhance the learning of content and at the same time use the content to teach basic learning skills. SQ3R is one of the study skills method employed with no conclusive evidence as of yet.

Barbara Forsythe (1986) in an advance seminar paper from Kean College, "A Multidimensional Approach to Teaching Social Studies" used the SQ3R method in her study of 37 fifth grade students from a middle-socioeconomic level of north central New Jersey. The 18 students in the experimental sample received special instruction in the specific study skill - SQ3R. The other 19 students were in the control sample. After a period of nine weeks, the experimental sample showed a significant increase in student achievement in the content area of social studies as shown in chapter tests. Her recommendation is that teachers should develop and use instructional strategies that stress organizational and reading skills in content area courses.

> No matter how good a study system is, it has little value unless students use it. A study technique is helpful only to the extent that it can be transferred by students to their studying. It is one thing for a student to listen and follow the explanation of effective study habits, and another for these habits to be used outside the classroom (Orlando, 1980,p. 136).

Using the guidelines set up in a TAG project, 48 teachers reported increased student involvement with textbooks and more opportunities for flexible small group work or individualized instruction in their content

classes. Forty-five reported enhanced overall learning of material (Davey, 1984). Textbook activity guides can provide students with successful and meaningful experiences with textbooks which can enhance learning from content area materials.

Although there is no conclusive evidence that one student study skills method TAG or SQ3R is far more superior than the other, the following conclusions can be made.

1. Students must work to attain independence, the proper use of study guides can assist in obtaining that goal.
2. Students are helped through the use of study guides to combine process and content for successful learning from content area text (Richgels, 1984).
3. According to the results of using student study guides there was no significant greater measurable student achievement. Motivation, self-direction and eagerness on the part of students is always a plus when teaching. Significant positive student achievement may be noted if content teachers, develop instructional study guides to help students to attain the above characteristics.

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